

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Justice Center Community Room
16540 Moonlight Rd. Gardner, Kansas
July 21, 2021 6 p.m.

A recording of the meeting is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9nT1FellzE&t=1405s>

CALL TO ORDER

The Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting was called to order at 6:11 pm in the Community Room of the Justice Center at 16540 Moonlight Rd., Gardner, Kansas. The following EDAC committee members attended, a quorum was present.

Members present: George Rifford; Stephanie Shaver (via Zoom); Harrison Hall; John Bowman
Ex-Officio present: Mayor, Steve Shute and City Council Member Randy Gregorcyk
Staff present: David Knopick and Melissa Krayca

Member(s) Absent: Brandon Williams

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes as written for the EDAC meeting on May 12, 2021

Motion made by Harrison Hall to approve the consent agenda item, seconded by George Rifford.

Motion passed 3-0.

PRESENTATIONS

Downtown Destination Plan presentation – Terry Berkbuegler, Senior Principal / Senior Vice President and Matt Evett Associate Principal with Confluence, lead consultant for the project team. The plan document can be found at:

<https://www.gardnerkansas.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/9639/637528062598270000>

Mr. Berkbuegler and Mr. Evett presented information found in the Gardner Downtown Destination Plan to the committee. The driving force behind the plan is to create a place that attracts people and businesses to downtown and strengthen its vibrancy. The planning process included public engagement/outreach thru food truck events and workshops as well as a walk and roll event to identify areas that could be improved for mobility-impaired persons. Pedestrian connection and parking management were identified as elements to address on Main St and traffic calming measures were viewed as important. Partnerships with schools, churches and developers are key to the success of the plan. The city should be a key partner in facilitating the partnerships and play an active role to the point of possibly incentivizing projects. People of Gardner that participated in the planning effort understand where downtown is located but feel there is no heart to the city and lack a place to gather. The area north of city hall seems to be the prime opportunity to make the first move for creating a gathering place.

Some of the concepts explored in the planning process and incorporated in the plan:

- Farmers Market
- Green Space (destination playground)
- Amphitheatre
- Shelter
- Community building

- Mobility Hub

The Gardner Library expressed excitement about the program activities and the possibility of additional outdoor space. The First Presbyterian Church is open to a partnership with the city and is comfortable with the plans in the downtown destination plan documents.

The streets of Downtown Gardner bring the community together and act as a connector between the proposed public spaces. A key aspect of this plan is to establish streetscapes with landscaping, banners, corner treatments and safe crossing. The ultimate vision proposes a slight increase in available public and private parking. However, parking is reorganized within the project area to support the introduction of new green space and infill development. When the vision of the plan is realized, Downtown Gardner will be a more walkable and pedestrian-friendly district. The enhancements would also function to calm traffic on the Main St.

Mr. George Rifford asked the Confluence staff how much traffic calming is necessary on Main St?

Mr. Berkbuegler stated some of it was dependent on how much KDOT would allow the City to do with Main St being a state highway as well. Narrowing the thru lanes, parking stalls and implementing a median are the proposed measures to calm the traffic. The bulk of the traffic on the corridor in terms of numbers is from the interstate to Center St and then turning North or South to head to the neighborhoods.

Ms. Jennifer Smith inquired when the last traffic count had been done because she believes that traffic has increased and people are turning off Main Street and cutting thru side streets to avoid traffic.

Traffic counts were conducted in early 2019 at designated intersections for the plan and Mr. Knopick stated he would inquire further concerning traffic counts on other connecting streets.

The Gardner Destination Downtown vision encompasses much of the Downtown core and has many exciting components that will transform the community. However, because of municipal financial realities, limited funding opportunities, property acquisitions, and the need for public / private partnerships, the overall vision will likely occur incrementally. Although the completed improvements are designed and will function as a holistic and interrelated environment, it is unlikely that the entire project could be funded and built all at once. Several factors will drive future decisions about how the plan can be implemented in phases over a period of time with varied funding sources. This plan will serve as the blueprint for construction even if staff or elected officials change over time. Implementation will require strategies for four key factors:

- Consistency of Leadership
- Funding
- Partnerships
- Phasing

Confluence led planning and design efforts for a new downtown attraction, Linden Square in Gladstone, MO. The community amenity was designed to create a stimulating interest in redeveloping surrounding properties in the area. Mr. Berkbuegler and Mr. Evett referenced the Linden Square project and encouraged the committee members and city officials to research the project and even reach out for advice as the space is similar to Gardner's. The City of Gladstone spent \$1.2 million on the Linden Square project that includes an amphitheater, pavilion, parking, pedestrian plaza spaces and lawn space that converts to an ice rink. Synergy had been created by the development of Linden Square and subsequently the Heights luxury apartments built in the downtown and a hotel is currently in the process of building as well.

Mr. Camis, Chamber of Commerce, asked how to bring awareness to the plan and how can we start to get the ball rolling?

Mr. Berkbuegler recommended that the City make the initial investment and start something significant to get people's attention.

Mayor Shute stated that large developers have shown interest and if that a partnership would help with acceptance by the people in the community.

Mr. Knopick affirmed that the community has to buy into the idea. The question is how to organize and what is the role of the committee, chamber and property owners in downtown. It is important to recognize we are larger than some of the communities who have already created the energy. What are we committed to as a community?

Mr. Berkbuegler encouraged that staff may want to reach out to other communities like Gladstone to find out their recipe for success. It is all manageable and scalable.

Mr. Camis asked how to distill the information in the downtown destination plan to share with people in the community?

Mr. Berkbuegler recommended that the implementation section is a good starting point. He also commended the committee, chamber and staff for reaching out to Confluence. He is excited that it is being talked about again and the right questions are being asked. Also, he suggested the committee consider making the downtown plan a regular agenda item for meetings so that it remains important.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Knopick gave a brief update on the permits issued in June. The numbers are a little behind pace from last year due to changes in the marketplace coming out of a pandemic.

Planning Commission is set for Monday July 26th and 2 large developments are being considered.

- 1. Treadway Apartments**

Locate at the southeast corner of I-35 and 175th Street approximately 2000' south of 175th Street

- 2. Cypress Creek-Single Family Subdivision**

Located between 167th Street and Madison Road just north of Gardner Edgerton High School.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Harrison and seconded by Gifford.

Motion passed 3-0.

Motion adjourned at 08:00 p.m.